

Assembly Bill No. 1255

CHAPTER 601

An act to amend Section 25619 of the Public Resources Code, relating to energy, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

[Approved by Governor September 27, 2012. Filed with
Secretary of State September 27, 2012.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1255, V. Manuel Pérez. Energy: renewable energy resources.

Existing law, the Warren-Alquist State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Act establishes the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (Energy Commission) and requires the Energy Commission to provide \$7,000,000 in grants to qualified counties, as defined, for the development or revision of rules and policies, including, but not limited to, general plan elements, zoning ordinances, and a natural community conservation plan as a plan participant, to facilitate the development of eligible renewable energy resources, and their associated electric transmission facilities, and the processing of permits for eligible renewable energy resources. For a county in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan planning area, existing law prohibits the commission from awarding a grant to such a county if it is not a "plan participant," as defined, in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

This bill would authorize the commission to award a grant to such a county if the county enters into a specified memorandum of understanding with the commission in which the county agrees to participate in the development of the natural community conservation plan. The bill would additionally include the County of San Luis Obispo as a qualified county to receive the above grants.

This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 25619 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

25619. (a) For purposes of this section, "qualified counties" means the Counties of Fresno, Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Madera, Merced, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Stanislaus, and Tulare.

(b) The commission shall provide up to seven million dollars (\$7,000,000) in grants to qualified counties for the development or revision of rules and

policies, including, but not limited to, general plan elements, zoning ordinances, and a natural community conservation plan as a plan participant, that facilitate the development of eligible renewable energy resources, and their associated electric transmission facilities, and the processing of permits for eligible renewable energy resources. The commission may allocate not more than 1 percent of appropriated funds to provide training to county planning staff to facilitate the siting and permitting of eligible renewable energy resources. A general plan element or zoning ordinance that is adopted or revised pursuant to this section shall be completed within two years of receipt of the grant and shall be consistent with the conservation strategies of any natural community conservation plan if one has been approved, or is under development, pursuant to the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 2800) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code). For counties within the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan planning area, the commission may award a grant to a county only if the county meets one of the following conditions:

(1) The county is a “plan participant,” as defined by paragraph (1) of subdivision (j) of Section 2805 of the Fish and Game Code, in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

(2) The county enters into a memorandum of understanding with the commission in which the county agrees to participate in the development of a natural community conservation plan for the purpose of ensuring that the natural community conservation plan can achieve the goals set forth in the planning agreement entered into pursuant to Section 2810 of the Fish and Game Code, that is dated May 2010, for the preparation of a natural community conservation plan, in a manner that is consistent with the applicable policies of the county.

(c) In its initial round of grant funding, the commission shall establish a preference for a grant to a qualified county in an amount that is adequate to develop a renewable energy element in its general plan that will facilitate the development and siting of eligible renewable energy resources that utilize multiple renewable energy technologies. The commission shall also establish a preference for a grant for those counties that have experience in geothermal energy development and have adopted a geothermal element, as defined in Section 25133, to its general plan.

(d) The commission shall only implement this section upon receiving a specific appropriation for the purposes of this section by the Legislature from the Renewable Resources Trust Fund or other funds from the Energy Resources Program Account.

SEC. 2. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to ensure, as soon as possible, that local government site renewable energy projects are located in areas that are least damaging to the environment, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.

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